

Helena Dindie.

Feb.

1918.

FINDING



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BY

HELEN DIRCKS

LONDON

CHATTO & WINDUS

1918

*That immeasurable space
Between the stars and me
Is surely a fitting cupboard
For the litter of my thoughts
Of you
And that lawful turmoil
Which is me.*

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FINDING

Dreams

WHEN all the house is silent,
And all the lights are out,
'Tis then that fairies flit to earth
And scatter dreams about.

They scatter them over the desert,
They scatter them over the sea,
Over hill and dale and valley,
And some stray here to me.

To T. B., Classicist

O YOU
Who bow down and worship
Before the great god Form,
Has it ever chanced
Upon a sultry summer's afternoon
You wandered
Down a country lane
And lighted
On a six-petalled dog-rose?
And was its scent less sweet,
Or shape less perfect,
Than those
That bloomed
Correctly

To T. B., Classicist

In the hedge ?
Or did you pluck it
From the rest
And throw it
Impatiently
Upon the road,
And say
Its Creator
Should have given it but five ?

Spring

AS I played among the flowers
In the dewy fields of May,
Something called me, something called me,
Something called me far away.

Life was calling, love was calling,
Calling to me far away,
So I left my play and flowers,
In those dewy fields of May.

London

M^{INE} Are the palaces,
The treasure-houses,
The slums ;

Mine
Are the broad highways,
The crooked lanes ;

Mine
Are the people
Myriad and shifting
As the sands of the desert ;

London

Mine

Is the tenderness

Of a mother for her child ;

Mine

Is the cruelty

Of a beast for its prey ;

Mine

Is the voice of to-day

And the whispering of to-morrow.

Come to me

And I will give you a restlessness

That is sweeter

Than peace.

Mary's Night Out

IT'S his night off and it's my night out .
Every Wednesday night,
And we go for a walk together
When the lamps are all alight.

We only walk along the road,
Or through the park, and then
He kisses me once or twice good-night,
And I'm always home by ten.

For I love him and he loves me,
And every Wednesday night
Things seem to me like fairy-land
When the lamps are all alight.

The Laugher

TO-NIGHT

I sat by the fireside
And looked into the fire ;
There
I saw
A great and bloody battlefield
Piled high with sodden dead.

And suddenly
A little black god
Came
And sat upon my shoulder
And looked
Into the fire with me ;

The Laugher

And then began to laugh,
And laugh,
And laugh. . . .

At first
I was filled with horror,
But soon
That passed,
And
At length
I found myself
Laughing too. . . .

The Stolen Heart

KIND yellow moon, you're old and wise,
Pray tell me how it is,
'That though he cannot win my heart,
I've surely stolen his ?

He's gone to learn of war and wounds,
Of man and man at strife,
And things the good Lord hides from me—
The bloodiness of life.

And he's brave and strong and splendid,
I know he'll do his part ;
And I, who wished to help him most,
Have stolen his poor heart.

The Stolen Heart

But I shall keep his heart with mine
Away from all the pain,
And try to give him back my own
When he comes home again.

Heroes

I'M glad I live
In these days,
When men do things immortal
Which are,
More frequently than not,
Suppressed
By the Censor.

The warriors
Of ancient Greece
And Rome
Did things
Which even now
Shine gloriously
Across the wilderness of time.

Heroes

But then
They lived in an heroic age,
When men
Were brought up heroes,
Just as we
Are brought up clerks ;
And the gods
Came down from heaven
And ministered
To their wants.

But our heroes,
Who fight and die
Away in France,
Before the war
Lived, perhaps,
In some dingy town
And earned,
With luck,
A pound or two a week ;

Heroes

And never even knew
They hadn't found
The light
That lingers
Somewhere in the world. . . .

And yet
Our men
Do things immortal.

I'm glad
I live in these days.

Then

THERE was neither day nor night
When I came to meet you,
Nor any pathway ;
I had neither hands nor feet
When I came to meet you ;
I saw your face
As one sees the moon
Amid a crowd of stars
When I came to meet you ;
And suddenly
I found myself
Standing near
When I came to meet you

Fantasy

IT'S twelve o'clock on a Sunday night ;
It's raining and I'm in my bed,
The lamplight from across the road
Makes shadows on my bedroom wall.

The street is quiet and asleep,
Except a footstep patters by ;
And faintly from the Uxbridge Road
There comes the thunder of the trams.

The rain is splashing in the street,
And makes music as it runs
Down by the gutters and the drains—
God's music on the muddy road.

Fantasy

The people sleeping down the street,
Who went to church to-day and prayed,
With large hymn-books, never heard
God's music on the muddy road.

Eve

THE Lord God made her soul
As white as a girl's should be,
He made her body strong,
And He made her face fair to see.

The Lord God stopped and sighed,
He thought : " She's a mortal Eve :
I'll give her a little sin,
And teach her to deceive ;

" I'll give her vanity,
A little shrewdness, and then
I will give her folly
To undo the hearts of men."

After

SOMETIMES
My thoughts are like a posy
of sweet sounds ;

Then
I find my body
Kneeling
At the altar of my heart
To be forgiven ;

And afterwards
I know peace.

Casualty

TO-DAY, when I was dreaming we were wed,
A woman came, red-eyed, who called you son ;
She kissed me brokenly, and cried as one
Who makes a lamentation for the dead.
Ah, she was very full of words and tears
For somebody she seemed to think was you.
I made as though to soothe her, then I knew
That suddenly her eyes were choked with fears. . . .

She thought, it seemed, that some mere piece of
shell

Had cut asunder your immortal make,
For soon she said : " I know his soul's with God."
To think that any part of you could dwell
Away from me ! I laughed for your dear sake ;
But still she was pathetic and so odd. . . .

Metropolis

EVERY day
Let me be lost in a dream,
So that even the Underground
Is the journey
Of Orpheus
To Persephone.

Flower Girl

I'M at Piccadilly Circus ;
All day long I stand and cry,
“ Six red roses for a penny ;
Who will buy, oh, who will buy ?”

When the lamps spring up like glow-worms,
Then my roses fade and die ;
Still I call to passing people,
“ Who will buy, oh, who will buy ?”

When the moon shines on the city,
When on my poor bed I lie,
Still in all my dreams I whisper,
“ Who will buy, oh, who will buy ?”

The War's New Year

THEY tell me that a year has gone
And a new year has come ;
That may be,
But for me there is no new year.

Henceforth
I live on dreams.
Dreams
Of those days
When he lived,
And dreams
Most bitter
Of what happiness there might have been
If only
He had not been killed.

The War's New Year

And people say :

“ Be comforted,

For surely you will meet in heaven.”

And how then

Can my love,

Which may for many years

Be withering on this barren earth,

Face his,

That has for so long

Blossomed

In the light of heaven ?

No.

For me

There is neither earth,

Nor hell,

Nor heaven.

Stars on the Town

AS I sit at the door of my house,
And as far as the eye can see
There are houses and houses like mine,
It seems very strange to me

That the stars come out and the moon comes
out

In the ancient, ancient way,
While the hum of the city comes over to me
On the breeze of the dying day.

Jingle

SHALL we linger, shall we linger where the
world is full of song,

Shall we linger where the flowers scent the air,

Shall we linger, shall we linger, shall we linger all
day long,

Shall we linger on for ever, linger there ?

Shall we linger, shall we linger where the birds in
summer throng,

Shall we linger where there's not a thought of care,

Shall we linger, shall we linger, shall we linger all
day long,

Shall we linger on for ever, linger there ?

Poems Written on My Seventeenth Birthday

I WAS born on such a night as this :
The self-same moon was in the sky,
The footsteps of the passers-by
Perchance were echoing in the street.

God gave on such a night as this
The mighty gift of life to me,
To breathe and hear, to feel and see ;
But she who bore me paid the toll.

On such a night as this was I
First sent to learn the way of life,
Its blood and tears, and hell and strife ;
Its human kindness more than all.

Written on My Seventeenth Birthday

Perhaps, on such a night as this,
The self-same moon still in the sky,
The footsteps of the passers-by
Perhaps still echoing in the street,
I'll die.

Prisoner

THE tattered regiments of the sun
Have long since
Fallen,
And the moon
Has climbed
The topmost pinnacles of the sky ;
But I
Am weary
And a prisoner in this narrow bed ;
No sleep comes
To loose me from this tyrannous casket,
My body,
And set me free
To wander

Prisoner

In that country
Where even the stars have not been.

Presently
The dawn will come
And look at me with haggard eyes
And say
The night is gone.

Then
Perhaps
I shall sleep.

Where Dreamers Only Go

THERE'S sunshine and a rippling sea
In the land where dreamers only go,
There's many a hill and dale and lea
In the land where dreamers only go.

But all is covered with silver mist
In the land where dreamers only go,
For the moonbeams have the sunbeams kiss'd
In the land where dreamers only go.

Sunrise

THE great sun came on the pallid dawn
Through the lines of singing sunbeams,
The great sun came and light was born
Through the lines of singing sunbeams.

The great sun came in shimmering gold
Through the lines of singing sunbeams,
The great sun came as he came of old
Through the lines of singing sunbeams.

Gift

I BRING to you
No jewels or fine ornaments ;
I come to you
Clothed
In no sensuous silken garments ;
I hold even my body
But a gaudy wrapping ;

Only
For you
I have a strange treasure,
Wrought
Partly of the beauty of the earth
And partly of its foulness,
Linked together
By a spark of heaven—
This myself
I bring to you.

Munition

WE have forgotten the guelder roses,
You and I,

The lilies
And the lilac too ;
The sweet scents of Spring
Pass by
Unnoticed.

My life
Lies in the turning of a lathe
And yours
In the skill to fight—
Two poor cogs
In the machinery of war ;

Munition

And yet
I cannot help but feel
The wonder veil
Upon our meeting eyes
Holds more
Than peace could ever bring.

Waking

THERE have been many nights and many
days

When I lived by enchantment of you near,
And all the simple woman in me, dear,
Seemed to have been born to give you praise ;
And I was all forgotten in a thought,
Just like a child in its first playing-time,
When all the world holds but a single chime
Of joy, that comes unmirrored and unsought ;

And then I came upon myself again,
Wakened, and seeing wonderfully the strife
Of this my earth and its divinity ;
And understood immeasurably my gain,
Which made me bless and bless the chance of life
That gave your dear mortality to me.

Peace

I HAVE been lying upon my bed
In pain—
Just a little pain—
And I have borne it
Impatiently.

Now
I am thinking of you
In France
Who make—not pain—
But agony
And valour
Go hand in hand.

Peace

I am ashamed ;
And yet
I am filled with wonder,
For now
I have found peace,
And I can guess
How infinitely sweeter
Your peace will be
When you shall find it
After all.

The Leaves

FROM every tree along the street
Upon a windy day
The leaves were blowing to my feet,
And all across the way.

And there was gold upon the ground
At every step I took ;
When suddenly I looked around
And joy my heart forsook.

Where leaves had been were dying men,
And dead men, side by side ;
It seemed the dying groaned and then
In agony they died.

The Leaves

I thought I saw my lover there
A-lying on the ground,
But when I knelt to touch his hair,
'Twas only leaves I found.

Then I was walking down the street
Upon a windy day,
And leaves were blowing to my feet,
And all across the way.

In the Park

THIS afternoon I went into the park,
And it was full of children at their play ;
I watched them laugh and shout and run away,
And stayed to watch them almost till the dark.
Oh, they had dirty little hands and knees,
And faces too, and half the small ones cried,
Worn out, to be picked up and have a ride ;
I watched them going home by twos and threes.

And then I laid my head upon the grass,
And prayed as I have never prayed before
To the Almighty God above, that He
Would give me back my man, and bring to pass
The end of all this bloody, awful war,
And give the world its peace, and peace to me.

Everyday

I'M always getting up and going to bed,
Laughing a little,
Crying a little,
And thinking
Of such things
As Tuesday week,
Or fog,
Or ham and eggs.

Where is the infinite pattern in all this ?
Can I have
No blinding agony
Or gladness
To lead me to an end
Or a beginning ?

Two Girls, 1915

WE went into the country, she and I,
One afternoon, away from heat and
dust

And turmoil of the town ; we felt we must
Go to the freedom of the fields and sky.
We walked along the quiet lanes, we two,
And then at length lay down upon the grass,
And watched the buzzing insects dart and pass
Into a sky that was for ever blue.

And then we talked of things of every day,
And then were silent ; in the trees above
The birds sang as they did in olden years ;
I knew she thought of someone far away,
For I could only think of you, my love ;
And when they met our eyes were filled with
tears.

Hitchy-coo

I NEVER knew till now
How blue delphiniums grow
In an old country garden ;
Or how red the roses are,
As they turn their adoring heads to heaven
To be adored
By their nurse,
The ever-careful sun ;
Or how sweet sweet-peas do bloom ;
Or how holy are the lilies
In their pure virginity.

All this I've learned
In two short days,

Hitchy-coo

In a garden where peace dwells,
And there's not a breath of city
Anywhere. . . .

But even here I heard
'The melancholy strains of "Hitchy-coo"
Whistled
Under my bedroom window,
At half-past six,
By the man who brought the milk ;
And I heard—and sighed.

To Sonia, Aged Three

SHE looked at me with her blue eyes,
With her blue eyes she looked at me,
And from each eye a tear peeped out ;
With her blue eyes she looked at me.

She looked as though she saw my soul,
Yet questioned what was there to see :
Still, half doubting, half believing,
She looked with her blue eyes at me.

She looked again, her eyes had changed,
A smile there lurked so sleepily,
As if she understood and mocked,
And mocked the very soul of me.

The Holding

QUEER things
You hold

In your two hands ;

Besides

The sunlight and the starlight.

Laughter

For my eyes,

Melody

For my voice,

Grace and swiftmess

For my limbs,

And strange magic

To make me tremble

When I think. . . .

Queer things

You hold

In your two hands.

The March

AS I lay a-sleeping
One night upon my bed,
I dreamed I saw an army
Go marching overhead.

Over all the army
There shone a gentle light,
'Twas neither moon nor sunshine,
But oh, so wonder-bright.

Every face was peaceful,
And as they marched along,
I seemed to hear them singing
A happy victory song.

The March

I dreamed I tried to follow
As they marched along the sky,
For there among the millions
I saw my love go by.

And that army entered
A mighty gate at last,
But when I tried to follow
I found the gate shut fast.

My love was a soldier,
And now my love is dead ;
I dreamed I saw an army
Go marching overhead.

The Thread

SWEET,
There is a thread
That links your heart with mine,
Fashioned,
Delicate as a spider's web,
Of the fine thoughts
That pass
From you to me,
From me to you.

Time
Will wear our youth away
And make our bodies dust again,
Yet somewhere

The Thread

Still

I know

That tender thread

Will link your heart with mine,

Sweet.

In the Trenches

SHE writes, "It's hard to be a girl
With things of every day to do.
I'd give the world to be a man,
To come and fight alongside you."

Lord bless her heart, she little knows
How much she fights alongside me ;
For somehow when the fight goes worst
Her face is always there to see.

Then, when my soul is almost lost,
And hell leaps up, and mercy dies,
I know God's in His heaven still
For seeing tears in her dear eyes.

Pine-Trees

I HAVE been standing on a little hill
Where there were pine-trees growing
straight and tall

And calm towards the sky above them all ;
There was no wind and everything was still ;
Yet I could hear a clamour all around
That seemed to come from every silent tree ;
Somehow it brought omnipotence to me
And made the human heart within me bound.

But suddenly the glory in me died,
And left me weak and full of doubts again,
And full of little sins and joys and strife—
Then with a helpless wondering I cried,
“God, You have let me hear their grand
refrain,

Have I no perfect song to make my life ?”

Mother

THEY say,
“ He’s fighting for his country’s cause.”
Or,
“ He will be strong and of good courage,
He fights
For honour,
Truth,
And right.”

But I,
Who lately
Have been walking in the blinding sleet,
Know
That he is cold,

Mother

And wet,
Hungry
Maybe,
And sleepless
With horror. . . .

So, he fights,
And will fight on.

Surely,
I am blessed,
Even
As the Mother of God.

To Priscilla

I WILL introduce the roses to Priscilla,
Roses, roses red,
I will bring them to her bed,
For she's only three days old
And mustn't venture in the cold
To see them
A-growing and a-blowing on the stem.

I will introduce the roses to Priscilla,
But I'll choose them carefully,
For they must only be
Buds, lest they dazzle her eyes
With their colour and their size,
For the elf
Is but a bud, a little bud, herself.

To the Moon

NOW everybody talks about the war,
And nobody of you ;
You're old-fashioned,
Out of date ;
Even your old friends the lovers have forsaken
you.

But last night
When you shone
As though you were indeed
A large round hole
In the floor of heaven,
Many of us could not help but say,
“ What a lovely moon ! ”

To the Moon

And perhaps
Some of the wounded
And the dying in the trenches
When they looked at you
Remembered
Some of the dear things
They had forgotten
In the bloodiness of battle,
And afterwards found peace. . . .

Perhaps,
Though no one seems to care,
You haven't shone in vain.

When Sleep is Near

THERE comes to me a time each night
When sleep is near,
And yet I have not slept.
The day seems gone a thousand years,
And into night
The tired sun has crept.

Then come the memories of the day,
Far off and faint—
Of voices in the street,
The clatter of the carts and trams,
And the rhythmic sound
Of a thousand feet ;

When Sleep is Near

And memories of clothes I've worn,
And tears I've wept,
And thoughts I've thought hid deep
Within my inmost heart of hearts ;
Far off and faint
They fade—and then comes sleep.

Miracle

I, Who clothe myself
Barbarically
In silks and trinkets;
I,
Whose painted face
Is never truly kissed
By sun
Or wind ;
I,
Whose very soul
Is like a common shop—
Even I
Am filled with holiness

Miracle

And thanksgiving
When I have walked
Down one short street
With you
Beside me.

In a Tram

I MET her in a tram one day,
She had a baby on her knee ;
Her face was pinched and cold and sad,
And pitiful to see.

She shivered in her ragged dress,
But all the time she seemed to try
To shield her baby from the cold,
And hush its whining cry.]

I looked at her, she looked at me,
Then suddenly both of us smiled,
And suddenly, I don't know why,
I stooped and kissed the child.

In a Tram

She looked again and said to me
What only woman's eyes can say ;
I got out at the stopping-place,
And she went on her way.

Morning Service

I PASSED the people going to church
One sunny Sunday morning ;
From every house
Along the road
They came in families
And groups of girls.

As I passed
I heard them say :
“ And so she came to tea.”—
“ Perhaps it would be better to have blue.”—
And,
“ I got it for elevenpence a pound.”

Morning Service

I saw the church,
And having watched them enter,
Walked on,
My head
Full of the fashion of the clouds upon the sky,
And the dappled pastures of the sun
Through the trees,
And the wind that blew the leaves about. . . .

I wonder
If God understood us both.

To You in France

DEAR, now before the daylight fades away
I wish that I could come and talk to you
A little while, and tell you just a few
Small things that make me happy in my day.
I want to tell you of the perfect scent
Of these red roses I have picked, and how
An organ's playing in the street just now,
And how this sunny afternoon I went
Into the park, and how the children played ;
So that at all times in this bloody war,
When you must kill to live, and have to see
Things you hold best on this green earth betrayed,
You will remember you are fighting for
This little world of dear small things, and me.

Us

I PICKED a flower :
It died.

I did not care ;

God made us both.

Mother's Song

I LAY last night with my babe at my breast,
With my babe at my breast,

And she slept sound as a bird in the nest,
As a bird in the nest;

But I was troubled and could not rest,
Troubled and could not rest,

With many thoughts of the babe at my breast,
Of the babe at my breast.

For I knew one day she would leave the nest,
She would leave the nest,

And I prayed that still she might find her rest,
She might find her rest,

As I lay last night with my babe at my breast,
With my babe at my breast.

Gethsemane

LONG ago
They say
That Jesus Christ,
The Son of God,
Came down to earth
To suffer
And to die upon the cross,
To save the souls
Of all humanity.

I have no faith ;

Yet sometimes
I wonder who planted
This Gethsemane
Within me
Where I have strayed.

Perhaps

PERHAPS you'll never know
How many times
I've plucked you from the shadows
And held you to my breast
And tried to feel caressed,
Perhaps you'll never know.

Perhaps you'll never guess
When you are near
I'm stolen by the shadows,
And see you from afar
As one sees a distant star,
Perhaps you'll never guess.

Perhaps

Perhaps it's better so ;
That heavy store
Of treasure that I have
For you, it may be only dross,
It may be no one's loss ;
Perhaps it's better so.

Quiet

SOMETIMES
As my quiet life goes on
And on and on,
I have a vision
Of the sweating hell of war
My brothers bear. . . .

Then
A sick scream
Comes choking at my heart,
Not for pity,
But just because
In spite of all
My quiet life
Goes on
And on and on. . . .

Herself

I AM the lover of a mistress dear,
But now she wears a ragged gown,
(The leaves are falling in the town)
My lady.

I love her profile clear against the sky,
The harvest moon is shining down,
(The harvest moon upon the town)
My lady.

The swift expression of her face is hid,
But still her starry eyes I greet,
(The lamps are lighted in the street)
My lady.

Herself

The full note of her wondrous voice is hushed,
To me she whispers tender-sweet,
(The wind is sighing in the street)
My lady.

Lotus

THERE are no lotus buds in London ;
Nor any gardens
Where the incense-bearing trees
Will fill the wind
With subtle perfume ;
Nor any golden-throated birds
To chant the splendour
Of a sunlit day.

Yet London
Can be the magic dwelling-place of a dream
If only
Your two fingers
Are resting upon my hand.

The Long Road

GLADLY she came, and with a smile
On her lips, and her feet were light,
But yet I fancied all the while
The look of the long road was in her eyes.

We laughed together in the sun,
Fell silent and then talked again,
Clasped our hands, but when day was done
The look of the long road was in her eyes.

She bore me children as women do,
Followed me wherever I went
Happily, but sometimes I knew
The look of the long road was in her eyes.

The Long Road

Until one day she looked at me
As she had never looked before ;
At last she knew that I could see
The look of the long road was in her eyes.

Days

THERE are some days
When a plenteous pitcher
Goes down
Into the well of my thoughts
And comes up
Brimming. . . .

And there are some days
When the well is there,
But alas!
The pitcher
Is broken.

Sunday Night

WHEN to-night I passed the hospital
I heard the wounded soldiers singing
A hymn of praise
Unto the Lord their God.

And my eyes
Grew wet
With blessed tears
Of wonder
For these soldiers
Who had suffered
Things I cannot even dream of,
And still

Sunday Night

Could find some thankfulness
To Him who made us all.

And surely
There were tears
In God's eyes
Too.

Now

I AM so full of laughter,
And my limbs are swift and strong,
My heart is always singing,
And my sleep is sweet and long.

The sun comes with the morning,
But I give the sun its light ;
The world it is my cradle,
And my mother is the night.

They say, "The day is coming
When your laughter will be still,
And your limbs will be weary
With the climbing of a hill.

Now

“Then you will cease your singing,
And your tired heart grow cold,
Your sleep-time will be weary ;
Some day you will be old.”

I am so full of laughter,
And my limbs are swift and strong,
My heart is always singing,
And my sleep is sweet and long.

Flower

I HAD been thinking,
When, looking down,
I thought I saw a baby's head
Against my breast.

I looked and looked,
And then I knew
It was just the white flower
You had given me.

Wanderer

LORD, I was born into this wonder place
Of palaces and slums and starry skies ;
You of Your wisdom gave me heart and eyes
That I might see its horror and its grace.
There was no one to guide me on my way,
And You were high above me in Your Heaven,
While I, with all this world that You had given,
Danced out into the sun to play my play.

And so I strayed as wayward as the wind,
And laughed with joy because the trees were green,
And cried to see your people come and go,
And riotously ran, and deeply sinned,
And lost my way, and thought You had not seen ;
Forgive me, Lord, for You have made me so.

Finding

THE first rose-lit perfection
Of my youth

Is gone,

And I am left

In daylight,

Desolate. . . .

Only this I hope,

That presently a light will shine

Upon this new-found me,

And I shall know

It is the sun.

